

Appln. No.: 10/635,352  
Amendment Dated September 27, 2006  
Reply to Office Action of June 27, 2006

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**Amendments to the Claims:** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) The combination of claim 16, said base member having an upstanding socket wall with an opening, said combination including  
a column having an end configured for insertion into the socket and an aperture configured to align with the opening in the socket wall;  
a latch disposed in the end of the column; and  
a biasing element configured to displace the latch through the aperture and into engagement with the column in the socket to secure the column in the socket.
- 2-9. (Cancelled)
10. (Currently Amended) A frame apparatus comprising a plurality of interlocking identically configured pieces, each piece having a first extension and a second extension extending perpendicularly from the first extension, wherein each of said first and second extensions has an internal channel with one or more ratchet teeth in said channel, the ratchet teeth in the channels of the first extensions being adapted to lockingly engage the ratchet teeth in the channels of the second extensions of the adjoining pieces, the first extension of each piece ~~having an internal channel adapted to receive the second extension of another piece in a telescoping connection, said internal channel in the first extension having a plurality of ratchet teeth configured to mate with a plurality of ratchet teeth on the second extension,~~ wherein said ratchet teeth in the first and second extensions are configured to slidably engage to allow the second extension to slide relative to the first extension into the channel, and further configured to lockingly engage to substantially prevent reverse sliding of the second extension relative to the first extension, such that the second extension is locked in engagement with the first extension.
11. (Currently Amended) A frame apparatus for concealing a joint between the end of an upright tubular shell and a transverse support joined to said shell, the shell having a rectangular outline with a width dimension and a length dimension, said frame comprising a plurality of interlocking identically configured pieces,

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said interlocked pieces forming a hollow rectangular frame adapted to surround the shell at its joints with the support,

each piece having a first extension and a second extension joined to said first extension, said second extension extending perpendicularly from the first extension,

the first extension of each piece having an internal channel closed at one end adjacent the junction with the second extension, and open at the distal end of said first extension remote ~~from~~ from said junction, said channel adapted to receive the second extension of another piece in a telescoping connection,

said second extension of each piece further comprising an internal channel and at least one breakable joint configured to be broken apart to change the length of the second extension to a desired length,

wherein each of said first and second extensions have one or more ratchet teeth in their respective internal channels, the ratchet teeth in the channels of the first extensions being adapted to lockingly engage the ratchet teeth in the channels of the second extensions of the adjoining pieces.

12. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of claim 11 having series of breakable joints, comprising an indicia adjacent to each joint of said series of breakable joints, each of said indicia being indicative of a selected, finished dimension corresponding to a selected width dimension or a selected length dimension of the tubular shell adapted to be surrounded by said hollow rectangular frame.

13-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) A frame apparatus comprising a plurality of interlocking identically configured pieces, each piece having a first extension and a second extension extending perpendicularly from the first extension, the first extension of each piece having an internal channel adapted to receive the second extension of another piece in a telescoping connection, said internal channel in the first extension having a plurality of ratchet teeth configured to mate with a plurality of ratchet teeth on the second extension, wherein said ratchet teeth in the first and second extensions are configured to slidably engage to allow the second extension to slide relative to the first extension into the channel, and further configured to lockingly engage to substantially prevent reverse sliding of the second extension relative to the first extension, such that the second extension is locked in engagement with the first

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extension, in combination with the frame apparatus of claim 10, wherein said frame pieces are being interconnected to form a hollow rectangular frame, said frame apparatus in combination with:

a base member positioned within said hollow rectangular frame, and

a tubular shell extending transversely from said base member, said shell having an end forming an outer perimeter adjoining said base member, said frame pieces interlocking around said perimeter to conceal the end of said shell and said base member.

17. (Previously Presented) A frame apparatus according to Claim 11, wherein said interlocking pieces comprise:

- A. a first trim piece having a long side and a short side, said short side of said first trim piece having ratchet teeth inside the channel; and
- B. a second trim piece having a long side and a short side, said long side of said second trim piece extending into the internal channel in the first trim piece in a telescoping relationship, said long side of said second trim piece comprising ratchet teeth slidably engaging the ratchet teeth in the short side of said first trim piece.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 17 wherein the short side of said second trim piece comprises an internal channel and a ratchet teeth inside the internal channel of the second trim piece.

20. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 19, said interlocking pieces comprising a third trim piece having a long side and a short side, said long side of the third trim piece extending into the internal channel in said second trim piece in a telescoping relationship, said long side of the third trim piece comprising ratchet teeth slidably engaging the ratchet teeth in the short side of the second trim piece.

21. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 20 wherein the short side of said third trim piece comprises an internal channel and ratchet teeth inside the internal channel of the third trim piece.

22. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 21, said interlocking pieces comprising a fourth trim piece having a long side and a short

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side, said long side of the fourth trim piece extending into the internal channel in said third trim piece in a telescoping relationship, said long side of the fourth trim piece comprising a ratchet teeth slidably engaging the ratchet teeth in the short side of the third trim piece.

23. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 22 wherein the short side of said fourth trim piece comprises an internal channel and ratchet teeth extending inside the internal channel of the fourth trim piece.

24. (Previously Presented) The frame apparatus of Claim 23 wherein the long side of said first trim piece extends into the internal channel in said fourth trim piece in a telescoping relationship, said long side of said first trim piece comprising ratchet teeth slidably engaging the ratchet teeth in the short side of the fourth trim piece.

25. (Cancelled).

26. (Currently Amended) The frame apparatus of Claim ~~[[25]]~~ 11 comprising one or more scored sections on at least one of the extensions of each of said first and second trim pieces.

27-28. (Cancelled).

29. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 1, wherein the socket comprises a first opening and a second opening, and the column comprises a first aperture and a second aperture, said first and second openings in the socket being configured to align with the first and second apertures in the column when the end of the column is inserted into the socket.

30. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 29, wherein the biasing element comprises an outwardly biased torsion spring in said column, said torsion spring having a first end and a second end, and the latch comprises a first pin extending from the first end of the torsion spring, and a second pin extending from the second end of the torsion spring, said first pin being configured to engage with the first opening and first aperture, and said second pin being configured to engage with the second opening and second aperture, said pins being urged into engagement with said openings and apertures under the bias of the torsion spring to secure the column in the socket.

31. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 1, wherein the biasing element comprises an outwardly-biased compression spring having a first end and a second end, and

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wherein the latch comprises at least one piston circumferentially disposed around one of the ends of the compression spring, said piston being configured to engage with the opening in the socket and the aperture in the column, said piston being urged into engagement with said opening and said aperture under the outward bias of the compression spring to secure the column in the socket.

32. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 31 further comprising a cylindrical housing disposed in the interior of the column, said housing forming a bore adapted to receive said piston and permit slidable displacement of said piston in said housing, wherein said housing is slidably adjustable within the interior of the column to permit alignment of the bore with the opening and aperture in the socket and column, respectively.

33. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 32 further comprising a guide peg on the piston, said guide peg extending transversely from the longitudinal axis of the compression spring, said housing comprising a guide slot adapted to receive the guide peg on the piston, wherein the guide slot comprises a recess adapted to releasably retain the piston inwardly and out of engagement with the opening and aperture.

34. (Previously Presented) The combination of Claim 33 wherein the guide slot comprises an inner recess, an outer recess and an intermediate recess disposed between said inner and outer recesses, said inner recess, intermediate recess, and outer recess being adapted to releasably retain the guide peg in a first position, second position, and third position, respectively, in which said piston is disengaged from the column aperture and socket opening in the first position, engaged with the column aperture and disengaged from the socket opening in the second position, and engaged with the column aperture and socket opening in the third position.